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## Policy Eye

### Highlights of week ending Friday 15 June 2018



(Welcome to Policy Eye, a weekly service from Policy Watch offering a regular round up of UK education headlines and stories from over the previous 7 days.)

#### The week summed up.

It's Festival time at the moment. We've had Hay, Bryanston and the International Business Festivals, while this week has seen the Festival for Higher Education and next week it's the all-encompassing Festival of Education. As Sir Anthony Seldon noted, such events not only help bring people together they help to restore some of the excitement back into learning as well. They're also invaluable in bringing together ideas on some of the key issues of the day, which for education at least include what our schools should be teaching, how best to transform our skills system and how the higher education landscape is shaping up.

Some of these issues have been evident in other developments this week which have included: two significant reports with some strong messages on funding; the latest apprenticeships stats and some calls to action by the Skills Minister; a challenging [paper](#) from the TaxPayers' Alliance on schools spending; an MPs' report on literacy and Fake News; and given it's also been London Tech Week, a fair bit on the perils or otherwise of social media.

Those two reports first. The first was from a [House of Lords Committee](#) which has spent much of the last year looking in detail at the costing and provision for post-18 year olds. Any report which leaves the Chair using phrases like 'getting screwed,' 'shocked' and 'scandal' doesn't make for pretty reading and that's clearly the case here with concerns about tuition fees, maintenance loans, apprenticeships, alternative routes, and market reforms, all getting a hammering. It's worth reading through their recommendations which include some old favourites like a UCAS style application system for all post-18 provision but also some newer ideas like benchmarking loan interest rates to the government borrowing rate. Both the [TES](#) and [FE Week](#) have good summaries of it all.

The other report highlighting funding issues was from the Children's Commissioner who was keen to look at how public funding for children stood ahead of next year's Spending Review. Again, it's not a very pretty picture in some quarters at least as the analysis from the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IfS) revealed. Core funding may have been protected but funding for some services has been cut while the bleak scenario around post-16 funding looks every bit as bad as has been suggested. The report is listed below.

Moving on, this week saw the latest set of data on apprenticeships which continues to make for fairly unhappy reading. The Skills Minister, however, has been in more positive mood heading up an [open letter](#) extolling the virtues of apprenticeships as well as the levy and issuing a defiant [message](#) on T Levels. The government has placed great store on the success of both but as Fiona Millar highlighted in her [comment piece](#) on T Levels, not everyone is convinced. Finally, the [TaxPayers' Alliance](#) has thrown the proverbial dead animal on the table on teachers' pay and school spending; all ahead of the Review Board response.



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## Top headlines this week

- 'Student loans heading for trillion pounds.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Modern students prefer work to drugs.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Councils begin to top slice from school budgets to replace ESG funding.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'Will the World Cup affect GCSE grades?' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Teenagers let down over degree choices.' ([Friday](#))

## People/organisations in the news this week

### General Policy

- [Treating Students Fairly](#). The House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee reported on its extensive inquiry into the funding and provision of post-18 education and training, arguing among other things that the tuition fee system wasn't working, the apprenticeship target should be scrapped and a single regulator for L3 and above 'other' programmes created
- [Children and young people's budgets](#). The Children's Commissioner published the results of research conducted by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IfS) into public spending in England on children for the first two decades of this century, showing that while education spending since 2010 has generally been protected, there have been significant cuts to post-16 provision and non-statutory children's services
- [Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation](#). The government launched consultation on how this new Centre should operate proposing that it should focus on three areas: analyzing gaps, articulating best practice, and advising government
- [AI and the Industrial Challenge](#). The Business Secretary, Greg Clark outlined how important artificial intelligence was to each of the core themes of the Industrial Strategy in a keynote speech as part of London Tech Week
- [Duty of Care](#). The Daily Telegraph, working with the NSPCC, launched a new campaign to help protect children from some of the dangers of online abuse through the provision of a legal duty of care on social media and digital companies
- [Start-up visas](#). The government announced a new, faster visa route for 'talented' entrepreneurs seeking to start up a business in the UK

### HE

- [Market stalls](#). The Public Accounts Committee reported on the operation of the higher ed market suggesting that competition was not necessarily driving up standards, alternative delivery models were yet to have an impact and students were finding it difficult to make informed choices let alone transfer at a later date if necessary
- [Student Loans in England 2017-18](#). The Student Loans Company provided the latest set of data on loan and repayment figures for students in England last year with some quite eye watering figures
- [Hawking Fellowships](#). The Minister for HE and Science announced the creation of a series of new fellowships in maths and physics to be awarded over the next five years in honour of Professor Hawking



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- **No smoke.** The HE Policy Institute and University of Buckingham published the results of a new survey, discussed at this week's Festival of Higher Education, indicating that current uni students were less likely to take drugs than perhaps had previously been considered and more likely to take a tougher line on the issue
- **In defence of alternative routes.** Alice Barnard, Chief Exec of Edge, responded to recent data showing an increase in BTEC and vocational students gaining entry into higher education, arguing that they provide a valuable skill set for employers which higher ed would do well to accommodate

## FE/Skills

- **Why we're pressing ahead with T Levels.** The Minister made the case in an article for FE Week which perhaps needs to be read alongside a [comment piece](#) this week by The Guardian's Fiona Millar
- **Coming out fighting.** The Skills Minister and 50 other leading figures signed a letter confirming their support for the apprenticeship system including the levy
- **Apprentice support funding.** The Minister outlined what was available from August as part of her correspondence with the Education Committee
- **Latest apprenticeship figures.** The DfE published the latest (Spring 2018) figures showing a continuing fall in apprenticeship starts, currently down 28% compared to the previous year
- **Structure and prospects appraisals.** The DfE published new guidance for college corporations on the processes for FE Commissioner-led structure and prospect appraisals (SPAs)
- **Mental health concerns.** The Association of Colleges (AoC) reported on how some colleges were tackling the issue of student mental health and wellbeing
- **Take 4.** The Association of Colleges (AoC) chief, David Hughes outlined four issues (better definition, fair access, Industrial Strategy alignment, supply side plans) that need resolving around apprenticeships in his latest blog for the TES

## Schools

- **Efficiencies not rises.** The TaxPayers' Alliance published a challenging paper on school funding suggesting that schools needed to take a deep look at their spending including teacher salaries
- **Fake News.** The All Party Parliamentary Group on Literacy launched a Children's Charter on Fake News as their latest report highlighted the problems schools and children faced in trying to tackle the issue
- **System reform.** The law firm Browne Jacobson published a summary of its recent roundtable discussion on developing a school-led system based around self-improvement, calling among other things for a clearer vision, coordinated structures, and support networks to help fuel self-improvement
- **Careers guidance in practice.** Ofsted director Sean Harford outlined what's expected when Ofsted looked at careers provision suggesting that on the basis of recent inspections, things were improving
- **Your school needs you.** The Education Secretary wrote to the members of the Institute of Directors encouraging them to consider becoming a school governor or academy trustee ahead of a guide on the role for business leaders due to be published by the IoD in September



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- **Everyone on Board.** Inspiring Governance and the National Governance Association (NGA) launched a new campaign at last weekend's NGA Conference to encourage more young and ethnic minority people to become school governors
- **Joining the profession.** The OECD published a further report, mined from its PISA 2015 data, looking this time at teacher recruitment approaches across OECD countries, finding that for the UK at least many young people, though not generally from among the high flyers, are keen on becoming a teacher
- **Preparing for Literacy.** The Education Endowment Foundation issued a report as part of its series aimed at helping improve language and literacy in early years, highlighting ways in which it can be prioritized and developed most effectively

## Tweet(s) of the week

- "Parents have been filming schools sports day races on their phones to query who really won. Wales online" - [@ed\\_ontap](#)
- "Perfect example of what is wrong with education today. People genuinely believe that reading and remembering are bad things. They think that this has failed people for years when the reality is that it is precisely this that has been successful for centuries" - [@Miss\\_Snuffy](#)
- "The sad truth is that marking is often not treated seriously. While endless effort is expended on timetabling lectures, the assessment of any knowledge gained by students is relegated to a scramble at the end of the academic year" - [@timeshighered](#)
- "BTEC snobbery and class prejudice is alive in our moribund HE sector" - [@FEcareers](#)
- "Writing a biog blurb for myself is my least favourite job. We should all agree to write each other's" - [@ellie\\_made](#)

## Other stories of the week

- HuggieBots. Yes, a robot is being developed that can hug a human being, so proving that they, robots that is, can actually offer emotional support. The robot is packed with soft cladding and offers twelve types of hugs which according to researchers at the wonderful Max Planck Institute, are being well received. Apparently one of the advantages is that the robot lets go when you tell it to, unlike it seems some other human beings. A link to the article is [here](#).
- Are we (sorry men) getting dumber? According to a story from Sky News this week, we, or rather men, are not getting any smarter. The evidence comes from some research from Norway on men's IQ suggesting that the well-known Flynn effect which sees average IQ scores rise roughly three points each decade, is in danger of reverse. Hmm, as a male, perhaps it's time to test out the theory with a couple of two Mensa type questions suggested by Sky. First, what is the missing number in this sequence: 3-7-13-27-53-?-213. Second, what four letter word can be attached to the beginning of the following words to form five longer words: Age, Width, IT, Stand, Wagon. A link to the article and the answers is [here](#)

## Quote(s) of the week

- "We will be requiring academy accounts returns to detail all staff paid over £100,000 and the percentage of teaching time those individuals undertake" – the Education Secretary clamps down on academy pay



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- “Because no-one ever turns up to look at the teaching” – Lord Forsyth, chair of the Lords report on post-18 education and training explains why he thinks the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) won’t work
- “Like many others, I sincerely hope this latest heave works” – The Guardian’s Fiona Millar reflects on T Level developments
- “In real terms, sixth form and FE spending per student will be at the same level in 2019/20 as it was 30 years ago in 1989/90” – IfS figures produced for the Children’s Commissioner make for bleak reading for some parts of the education system
- “In fact for me, it’s one of the most important subjects” – Myleene Klass extols the virtues of music in schools
- “Our year 9 pupils have to hand in their phones at night” – the head at Eton College on his school’s mobile phone policy

## Number(s) of the week

- 87. The number of people in education, children’s services and social mobility who were recognized in last weekend’s Queen’s Birthday Honours List
- 2.8%. Average wage growth in the three months to April 2018, down 0.1% on the previous quarter, according to the latest official labour market figures
- £34,800. The average loan balance for the HE 2018 repayment cohort on entry to repayment, a £2,380 increase on the previous year, according to figures from the Student Loans Company
- 261,200. The number of apprenticeship starts between August 2017 and March 2018, compared to 362,400 for the same period last year, according to latest official statistics
- 71%. How many colleges inspected over the last year were rated ‘good’ compared to 49% in the previous year, according to Ofsted
- £10,000. Total public spend per child in England last year up to the age of 18 and excluding healthcare, higher than it was in real terms in 2000 but lower than its high point in 2010, according to figures produced for the Children’s Commissioner
- 71%. The number of current uni students who indicated they hadn’t taken illegal drugs in a survey commissioned by HEPI and the University of Buckingham
- 5%. How many young (15 yr olds) people aspire to becoming a teacher compared to an OECD average of 4.2%, according to a new report from the OECD
- £783,326. How much schools spent on average on teaching staff costs last year, the biggest item of spend by far according to the TaxPayers’ Alliance
- 53.5%. The number of teachers who believe that the national curriculum fails to provide children with the literacy skills to be able to tackle fake news, according to a new report by MPs
- 2%. The drop in the number of applications for primary school places compared to last year, according to latest data from the DfE

## What to look out for next week

- Collab Group of Colleges Annual Conference (Monday)



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- Education Committee evidence session on school and college funding (Tuesday)
- Festival of Education (Thursday, Friday)